

Pedagogical introduction. (Elżbieta Mach)

It took three years to create the project you have in your hands: a pilot educational proposal aiming at development of active and conscious European citizenship. The curriculum has been designed for students, teachers, and parents who work together on child's education. The scope of subjects presented in this curriculum is connected with values presented and analysed during various school activities – values considered in European countries as important and vital in the development of European culture. As such values we acknowledge:

- common cultural elements and roots of Europe;
- cultural diversity of European countries and cultures as a value and richness of Europe;
- peaceful conflict resolution.

Introducing such subjects to children just beginning their school education is not an easy task. It is not just about feeding children with a given amount of information, but first of all it is about increasing children's awareness of the subject matter as well as shaping their attitudes towards it into attitudes desirable from the point of view of the society.

Teaching young children at the beginning of their school education is a very responsible task as it is a very important point in their development. Teaching at this stage has a propaedeutic character, preparing the child to systematic work in his school career, introducing him to the world of science, socialisation, new competences, needs and roles. The child's development at the age of 6-10 years is very intensive. Hence, teaching should be conducted on many levels yet be integrated; it should take into consideration the psychological conditions connected with age and level of development, as well as individual pace of development of each child. The basic activity of a child at the age from six to ten years is *doing* things and getting to know the world through his own experiences. The child's attention is to a great extent conditioned by what is going on around him. This is why teaching through play, various activities, through research and encouragement of various hobbies is of great importance.

Children's thinking at this stage is activated also by doing things together: by task solving, speech development, expressing thoughts, analysing and synthesising various phenomena. Children's thinking has a visual – concrete character. It is with time that it gains symbolic and abstract characteristics. It is through taking part in social situations new to the child and through mastering reading and writing skills that speech develops rapidly, and at the same time the child wants to learn more and more, looks for novelty.

Thanks to those stimuli, memory is developing, together with the ease in using already possessed knowledge. The child's success at school is conditioned not just by general development tendencies, but also by the degree of school maturity: the starting level of development of abilities to use one's mind; social, physical and emotional maturity; skills and abilities acquired in the first six years of child's life.

A very important aspect of early school education is building child's sense of success at school, making use of his individual skills, unique family and cultural experiences, as well as supporting each child and motivating him to take actions. One of the tasks to be faced by each teacher is to connect the information fed to the children, together with skills and attitude development; with the child's world: a real life, in which he functions, to which he will refer, where he will make use of what he has learnt and where he will display attitudes learnt at school. It is necessary to pay attention to the fact that for young children their school and teachers are extremely important authorities they can look up to, very often trusted much more than parents or peers. In early school education, the teachers' responsibility for their own actions and gestures is particularly significant as children believe in everything they hear from their teacher.

For the purposes of this project and its goals, the Consortium of *European Curriculum for Children of Migrant Workers* Project Partners has decided to limit the subjects in this curriculum (as such already difficult and complicated for a young student) to four main themes. These themes are well – known to each child, regardless of his religion, culture, social status, background, origin, level of individual development, etc. These themes are as follows:

- games and plays;
- house;
- family;
- food and table manners.

Each of the themes includes the aforementioned most important European values. The aim of each lesson proposed there is to promote active European citizenship. It will be achieved through preparation of children to taking part, consciously and intentionally, in everyday life of Europe, implementing the tools of peaceful conflict resolutions, and by promoting and strengthening the feeling of pride to be a European (in which being English, Belgian, Italian or Polish is one of the elements of European identity.)

The particular themes have been designed by respective project partners in the form of educational mini – packages (lesson plans, bibliography, illustrations, and teaching aids.)

Although based on similar graphic design, the proposals will differ from one another as each deals with a different theme and contains element characteristic for the 'local' point of view of a given project partner. It is necessary to stress here that each set of suggested lessons is by no means exhaustive. It is made of only a few examples indicating how the particular theme can be introduced to children. Of course, each teacher or parent, inspired by them, can make his own set of lesson plans, adjusting them to specific needs of the social environment of children or his own interests. Such lessons, depending on school or local curriculum, can be carried out as separate activities, or they can be correlated with activities on similar subject. In every theme suggested here, there are correlations with language and communication, art, social studies, science. It is also possible to use elements of PE, hobby encouragement, etc.

We have decided to incorporate the values in question into themes of games and plays, families, house and food because while dealing with each of those subjects, it is possible to shape desirable social and individual attitudes, as well as to aid the development of child's European identity, through:

- noticing and respect for cultural variety of European countries and nations;
- noticing cultural individuality of oneself, as well as of the social / ethnic / national / religious group, with which the student is associated;
- acceptance of the fact that cultures interweave;
- remembering the cultural achievements of past generations and passing that memory on to posterity;
- building responsibility for the shape of future society in integrated Europe;
- searching for conflict – free solutions and implementing rules of peaceful conflict resolution;
- abiding by norms and rules of behaviour;
- establishing and negotiating rules of team work;
- taking decisions and predicting their consequences;
- increasing sensitivity to needs of other people;
- development of interpersonal communication skills;
- skills development in individual research and selection of information when dealing with different sources (books, Internet, observations, conversations, TV, etc.);
- involvement in education and self – study.

Each set of suggested lesson plans lists certain methods of working with children – methods the author of the plan thought to be most appropriate in a given situation. Most of the methods are known to nearly every teacher in early education field: they are

based primarily on action, combining theory with practice, didactic games and simulations.

A great majority of suggested activities has been tested in partner schools.

Of course, each teacher willing to use this curriculum can use his own teaching methods which he uses on regular basis when working with his students, or which he considers the most appropriate.

The authors of specific parts of the project have included a rich source of possible teaching aids in the form of useful bibliography and Internet links. You can also find additional materials to themes of this curriculum on our website http://www.sokrates-migrants.uj.edu.pl/index_ms.html